DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 048 EA 025 610

AUTHOR Hamm, Jarold D.
TITLE Drawing a New Picture: Describing the Work of Exemplary Curriculum Directors.
PUB DATE Feb 94
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Washington Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Spokane, WA, February 3-5, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Effectiveness; *Curriculum Development; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership Styles; Organizational Climate; Organizational Development; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that described the work of four exemplary district-level administrators for curriculum and instruction (curriculum directors). Data on the four curriculum directors in a northwestern state were derived through structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The work of the curriculum directors was synthesized into the following categories: (1) communication; (2) curriculum and instruction; (3) program responsibility; and (4) technical expertise. Contextual factors, which shaped the administrator's work, included internal, external, intrinsic, and time factors. Each of the directors utilized the following four different work styles to achieve organizational goals--situational leadership, support for change, respect for developmental levels, and effective planning. These administrators focused on the slow, deliberate process of creating a district-wide culture. Outcomes included an enriched curriculum, improved instruction, and a better educated staff. Findings indicate that the directors' visions corresponded with their immediate supervisors and their district's philosophy. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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DRAWING A NEW PICTURE: DESCRIBING THE WORK OF EXEMPLARY CURRICULUM DIRECTORS.

Jarold D. Hamm, Ed. D.
Kelso School District
Kelso, Washington

February, 1994

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This paper was prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Washington State Association of Supervisors and Curriculum Development held in Spokane, Washington, February 3-5, 1994.

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DRAWING A NEW PICTURE: DESCRIBING THE WORK OF EXEMPLARY CURRICULUM DIRECTORS.

Introduction

This exploratory study focuses on exemplary district-level administrators for curriculum and instruction, also known as curriculum directors. The major purposes of this study are to explain the work of exemplary curriculum directors, describe how their work was conducted, and present the contextual factors that affect their work. Literature regarding curriculum directors have consistently reported on this work with lists of tasks that provide little specificity and are suspect due to self-report bias.

In this study, four exemplary curriculum directors in a Northwest State were carefully selected to be studied. Curriculum directors, who were viewed as effective by their peers, were nominated by other curriculum experts. To be considered, each curriculum director had to have worked full-time for three years in the curriculum and instruction area and have gained a reputation as a knowledgeable leader in the area. The four curriculum directors who received the most nominations were contacted, invited to be a part of the study, and each agreed to participate.

The data for the study was collected and analyzed through a naturalistic, qualitative methodology. It included observations and interviews with curriculum directors and other key informants within the four districts. In addition, relevant documents were collected. Data collection was conducted in a circular fashion until it appeared that no additional significant data could be generated through these processes.

The analysis of the data was completed by first identifying themes and categories from a literature review completed prior to beginning data collection. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method was used in data analysis. Analysis began with the first data collected, was cyclical in nature, and continued throughout the study. Data were compared to create categories, which in turn

allowed for an integration of categories and their properties, and facilitated the writing of tentative hypotheses or theories.

Data was described through a portraiture methodology (Lightfoot, 1983). In addition, findings, implications, and recommendations for future study are also presented in the following sections.

Context of the Problem

Demands at national, state, and local levels for increased excellence in public schools by numerous commissions, agencies, and citizens call for renewed efforts to find better and more effective practices to improve student learning. Critics identify increased costs and declining test scores as reasons to question how materials are selected, courses organized, and instruction takes place. Many of these criticisms lie in the domain of either curriculum or instruction. The improvement of instruction and the development of curriculum are the responsibility of each educator. However, district-wide leadership in curriculum and instruction has become the responsiblity of a district level administrator who is called the curriculum director.

Ornstein (1986) found the distinction between curriculum, instruction, and supervision to be fragmented and in flux. It was argued that if a coordinated plan is not identified for managing the change that must occur, it will be extremely difficult to identify, set up, and complete activities necessary to institutionalize curricular change. Therefore, it was felt that by clarifying and describing the curriculum director's position, districts could begin to move toward providing the best possible educational opportunities in all areas (Babcock, 1965).

Nevertheless, despite a number of studies, researchers have been unable to provide a clear conceptualization of curriculum directors' duties, responsibilities, and work (Babcock, 1965; Doll, Shafer, Christie & Salsbury, 1958; Eye, Netzer, and Krey, 1971; Ornstein, 1986; Reader & Taylor, 1987). Researchers consistently have reported on this work with lists of tasks that provide little specificity or are suspect

because they are self-reports. The lists tend to be descriptive in nature and do not provide a sense of real people or actual positions. They fail to explain why and how curriculum directors do their work or whether contextual factors affect the work. Additional investigation is needed to clarify and more clearly describe the work of curriculum directors.

Conceptual Framework

A framework that interrelates the work of the curriculum director, the contextual factors, and organizational goals has been developed in answer to the questions that guided the study. These questions included (1) What was the work of four exemplary curriculum directors in public school districts? (2) How was each curriculum directors' work conducted? and (3) What were the contextual factors that conditioned these curriculum directors' work?

Within each district, both the external and internal circumstances define and shape the organization's goals. The goals in turn define each person's role, therefore defining the work.

Through analysis, the work of the curriculum director can be understood through consideration of four areas: a description of the contextual factors that affect the work, the nature of the work itself, how the work is completed, and the relationship of the factors to the work of attaining the organizational goals.

The eleven categories of work were initially grouped into four major themes, that include communication, curriculum and instruction, program responsibility, and technical expertise. These categories could not be viewed in isolation, but appeared to form four overlapping, yet distinct, areas of a curriculum director's work.

The work, then, was continually pressed and massaged, either in a positive or negative way, by the various contextual factors that existed within each setting. These contextual factors facilitates or hinders the curriculum director's work or were

perceived to influence, direct, or condition the work. As the contextual factors condition the work, each affects the attainment of the organization's goals. More important, the factors either support or impede reaching the goals. The work must be viewed within the cultural factors and the total environment that surrounds the work (See Table 1).

Finally, workstyle was viewed as the means by which each curriculum director moves the organization through the contextual factors and toward the attainment of it's goals. They are the tactics and techniques used by each curriculum director to complete her work.

Through an analysis of this study's data, the work of these four exemplary curriculum directors can be understood through three areas: the contextual factors that condition the work, the work itself, and the workstyle utilized to complete the work.

Research Design

The study itself, as well as the goals of the study determine the study's design. This study's goals were to gain a clearer understanding of the work of exemplary curriculum directors, the factors that affect their work, and how the work is done. Consequently, the research design selected to explain the dynamic nature of districts and the actions of the curriculum directors was qualitative.

A two phase study was designed to meet the purposes of the study. The first phase focused on the development of tentative hypotheses consistent with the three research questions that guided the study. The second phase focused on verification of the tentative themes or generalizations from the first phase and generation of a grounded theory through the collection and analysis of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The field research was conducted in a circular fashion and consisted of several key elements, including structured and unstructured interviews, participant

observation, and document collection. The data were collected during a ten month period between October, 1992 and May, 1993.

The selection of the sites and participants was not random, but rather based on specific criteria that best met the needs of the study. Four curriculum directors, who were believed to be exemplary, were selected for study through a process of peer nomination by other curriculum experts. To be considered, each must have worked full-time in the curriculum position for a minimum of two years in the state during the 1992-93 school year and were identified as the district's curriculum director who, in the school district's organization, has the responsibility to monitor, change, stabilize, and evaluate the district's formal curriculum. In addition, each curriculum director had to hold a reputation as a knowledgeable leader.

A Demographic and Descriptive Picture

An overview of the four curriculum directors and the districts in which they work is helpful to draw a clearer, more precise picture of an exemplary curriculum director, where she works, what she does, and how she completes her work. In addition, by drawing this composite picture of these curriculum directors, qualities and characteristics may emerge that explain why these four women are considered by their peers as exemplary.

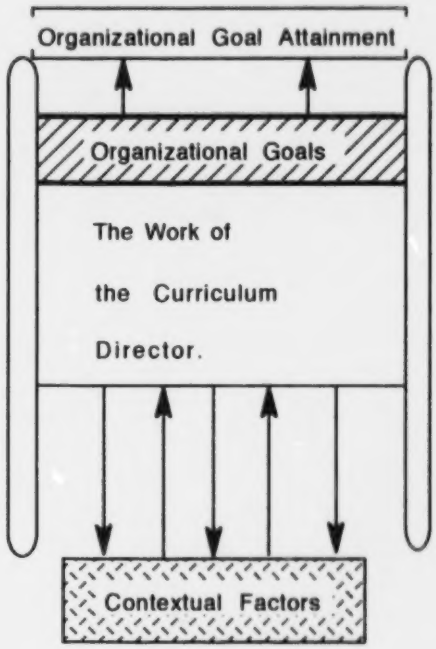
District Demographic Data

The curriculum directors selected for this study worked in districts that ranged from 5,000 to 19,000 students in one Northwestern state. All the districts were suburban districts, each one located close to a large metropolitan city. Two districts were growing at the rate of about five percent per year. The others were stable in student growth. Three of the sites were districts with one regular high school while the fourth district had three.

The districts show a varying amount of financial stability and voter support. In two districts, the Mount Tyee School District and the Lone Elk School District,

Table 1
Hypothetical Construct

The conceptual picture of the organization, the work, and the contextual factors that affect the work.



External Factors
Internal Factors
Intrinsic Factors
Time Factors

patrons passed multi-year maintenance and operation (M & O) levies, and district leaders believe they have community support in their actions. During the study, the North Sky School District failed to pass a levy to continue building construction, but the M & O levy was passed. The Los Diego School District had a history of not supporting their schools with levies, and only in the past year had voters approved a levy to support science.

The Curriculum Directors

This study examined four curriculum directors, each one purported to be exemplary and having the responsibility to monitor, change, stabilize, and evaluate their district's formal curriculum.

These four curriculum leaders were selected through a process of peer nomination from the state-wide population of full-time curriculum directors who worked in the curricular area during the 1992-93 school year. The participants were nominated because of their reputations as knowledgeable leaders.

All of the selected curriculum directors are women. Their educational experience ranges from twenty-two to thirty years, and they had been in their current position as their district's administrator for curriculum and instruction for between three and fifteen years. Three of the four directors had each taught at the elementary level during their careers.

One curriculum director has a superintendent's credential, two have principal certificates, and one has no administrative certificate. Two have not been a building principal nor a line administrator.

One of these curriculum directors has a doctorate. All the curriculum directors have liberal arts undergraduate degrees with either an English or elementary education major.

One had published a book and another was writing a book during the study. All four are outstanding presenters and are in demand to present at both the state and national level in their areas of expertise.

Each participant was aware of the other subjects in the study and recognized the others as exemplary curriculum directors.

The Portrait

These curriculum directors exuded an almost tangible air of warmth, welcome, and caring from the moment the researcher met each of them. Their nature was one of up-beat and positive support. These feelings were reinforced over and over throughout each day spent in the various districts as these four women interacted with others and did their work.

They are all well-educated, with a generalist background and an expertise in many areas including strong facilitation skills and a superior knowledge in cutting-edge instructional and curricular areas. Each has excellent teaching skills and works hard to create and maintain a positive learning environment.

To a great extent, the central life interests of these four women is realized in their work: the various facets of curriculum and instruction. Each curriculum director exhibits a dedication to curriculum, their work, and excellence. They all understand and can succinctly present a comprehensive framework and vision that guide their actions.

The central purpose of each curriculum director is to create a desired change in their respective districts so that it is in harmony with the overall district vision or goals. In this process, they struggle with the many faceted nature of the work and battle the contextual factors both from within their district and from the community, state, and national levels.

These curriculum directors are considered by fellow educators, both within their districts and state-wide, as successful administrators and leaders of people and

programs. They are eager to share their knowledge and experiences and do so in a variety of forums. Each director has developed a specific area of expertise within the curriculum area: assessment, outcome-based education, integrated learning, and themed-based instruction. They are frequently asked to present to others information regarding their area of expertise.

Their Office

The primary workspace for each curriculum director reflects the warm, inviting, yet hectic and extremely busy person who works there. While the office space was at a premium, personal touches that illuminate each curriculum director's personality and achievement are in evidence. There are hints of hobbies, interests, and gifts from others in some corner or nook in each office.

The door is usually open and the steady stream of people who just step to the door for a word or greeting indicates the desire of each curriculum director to please and to meet the needs of her constituents.

The walls are typically covered with pastel prints, a white board, some professional awards and degrees, and hand-drawn pictures from a child. Bookshelves are lined with sample texts, curriculum books, notebooks full of important documents, and piles of folders and reports from current projects. Coffee cups, spoons, sugar, and napkins are strategically placed within reach on a table.

Each office has a desk piled high with projects, folders, phone messages, and other important materials. File cabinets full of memos, curriculum catalogues, and folders containing old projects are linked together like soldiers at attention in a corner of each office.

A round table, with a few chairs around it, is strategically placed in each office for small group work. To work around this table, however, requires several piles be transferred to another place in the room.

Technology of many types are in evidence. Computers (either IBM or Macintosh), modems, cellular phones, and Email are a part of their work. A "Daytimer" is in easy reach and usually a plastic basket or cardboard box containing folders and things for the next meeting is close at hand.

The Elastic Day

Each curriculum director begins her work early, and often they hit the ground running. Their days are a plethora of brief meetings, interactions, and discussions with a variety of people. Typically, their first stop is at an early meeting with staff or beginning an all-day curriculum development inservice. Buying donuts and attempting to find some quality time to create, write, or plan are other early morning tasks each director faces.

Next may come a meeting with a salesman, building administrator, or a visit with their supervisor. This activity is followed by a short conference with her secretary to establish her workday, check for brushfires, identify new work, and respond to phone messages.

During the lunch hour, these curriculum directors try to be in their office because as Helen said, "This is the time that many teachers call since it is their lunch period and they are free." Each director expressed a priority whenever possible to be in her office and available from 11 to 1 for staff calls and possible preventative interventions.

Early afternoon is a time to extinguish "brush fires", set up for committee meetings, visit a school, or network with others.

At three the second major part of the day begins as the curriculum committee meetings take precedence, with the curriculum director in attendance as facilitator, resource expert, or observer.

Several evenings during the week are taken up with either a class to teach, a seminar to take, a meeting to attend, or planning for the next day. The day ends about ten o'clock without all the work having been completed.

The Work of Curriculum Directors

This section describes the work performed by these curriculum directors. The work of curriculum directors is comprised of these specific roles, duties, and tasks chosen by the curriculum director herself, assigned by a member of the district's organization, or expected as part of the district's culture.

The Road Traveled

The work of each curriculum director can be thought of as a trip between Seattle and Los Angeles with a load of merchandise. The destination is Los Angeles, and when it is reached the district's goals have been met. The vehicle each curriculum director selects can be viewed as their work style, and the motor is thought of as the many tools each curriculum director has at her disposal. The merchandise can be perceived as the children's learning. The challenge for the operator is to drive her vehicle, stay focused on the route, and arrive at Los Angeles as quickly as possible.

While each curriculum director must choose her own route south, the canyons and rivers may divert or end the road, just as the contextual factors hinder or block efforts to complete the work. As each curriculum director comes to a roadblock on the trip, she may or may not have a problem with it. There could be a bridge over it or a ferry across it. She may have to provide information or fuel to continue the trip. However, if the factor is significant the curriculum director must either conquer it or go around it. Such is the way of contextual factors.

The route for each is different. While the general heading is south, some may take an interstate freeway, others a scenic tour, and still others may become lost for a

while. What is important is that each curriculum director is traveling generally southward toward their destination and accomplishing the organizational goals.

They will be traveling at different speeds and for different lengths of time. Their work or trip is conceptually the same and yet each is different. The factors that block one trip might not exist for another. The route and engine size selected will determine travel time and some of the factors each encounters. Each one's methods and thinking will provide the vehicle, plot the route, and determine the travel time.

While a road map or an overall vision is a handy device for each to use to start the trip, once into the journey, routes or work are chosen based on the needs of the curriculum director, the contextual factors and organizational demands, and the people within the district.

The Work of Curriculum Directors

Prior to the study, an in-depth review of literature regarding curriculum directors revealed eleven categories identified as the work. These categories were grouped into four themes and served as constructs to begin the study. The categories and themes, as reported in the literature, were **Communication**: (1) represent the superintendent and board, (2) communicate with other administrators, (3) work with staff, (4) address student needs, (5) be a liaison to patrons; **Curriculum and Instruction:** (6) coordinate curriculum development, (7) select appropriate materials, (8) evaluate programs and courses; **Program Responsibility:** (9) implement staff development, (10) coordinate instructional support; **Technical Expertise:** (11) be the district's technical expert.

During data analysis, the researcher cycled between the eleven literature categories from the literature review and the data collected during the project until themes from within the study "emerged" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As data from the interviews, documents, and observations were analyzed, it appeared that each

curriculum director did not display work in each category, and new categories were generated. Data analysis ended when no additional new categories emerged and any new data collected could be placed into existing categories.

The result of data analysis was that work of these four exemplary curriculum directors converged from the eleven categories into the new categories of:

1. Communicates with supervisor
2. Communicates with other administrators
3. Communicates with teachers
4. Group facilitation skills
5. Develops curriculum
6. Facilitates selecting materials
7 Implements staff development
8. Becomes the technical expert

The eleven themes converged into eight are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Emergent Work Categories

Categories from the Literature		Emergent Categories
Communication:		
(1)	represent the superintendent and board	1. Communicates with supervisor
(2)	communicate with other administrators	2. Communicates with administrators
(3)	work with staff	3. Communicates with teachers
		4. Group facilitation skills
(4)	address student needs	
(5)	be a liaison to patrons	
Curriculum and Instruction:		
(6)	coordinate curriculum development	5. Develops curriculum
(7)	select appropriate materials	6. Facilitates selecting materials
(8)	evaluate programs and courses	
Program Responsibility:		
(9)	implement staff development	7. Implements staff development
(10)	coordinate instructional support	
Technical Expertise:		
(11)	be the district's technical expert	8. Become the technical expert

Findings of the Study

The overriding purpose of this study was to explore the work of four exemplary curriculum directors. This section describes the significant findings of the study. The findings are presented in three parts based on three overarching questions that guided the study.

(1) What was the work of four exemplary curriculum directors in public school districts?

The core work of these curriculum directors was comprised of the many activities, duties, roles, and work which they believed were directed toward achieving the organizational goals, addressing contextual factors, improving the organization, and providing organizational stability. An analysis of the study's data indicated that the four separate and overriding themes developed from the literature review which began the study do embody the work. These themes include: (1) communication (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) program management, and (4) technical expertise. The following is a brief summary of those four themes and the categories of work which were found to be contained within each theme:

Communication

The ability of each curriculum director to communicate with all segments of the organization was vital. The curriculum director was viewed as the leader, spokesperson, and visionary for the curriculum and instructional part of the organization, as well as the keeper of instructional information.

While others in the organization established the overall goals, the curriculum director worked to interpret, explain, and implement them. This administrator provided articulation between curricular areas, worked to modify existing programs, as well as organized and developed new programs to create systematic change to meet the overall goals. The Communication theme contains four distinct categories of curriculum director's work which were synthesized from the data:

Communicates with Supervisors: The curriculum directors in this study maintained close contact with her superordinate. The visits kept both parties informed about events of mutual interest, emerging issues, and projects in progress.

Often this time was spent in sharing not only with the superordinate, but also in educating other members of the district-level administrative team regarding curricular issues. These discussions enable the visions of the curriculum director, her superordinate, and the district to begin to blur and to become as one.

The relationships were found to have a give-and-take nature. A high degree of trust and collegiality was reported in each case. In these districts, the superordinate worked together with the curriculum director to accomplish the goals in the curriculum and instruction portion of the organization.

Communicates with Administrators: Each curriculum director was found spend a great amount of their time working with building-level administrators. These directors were a member of many district-wide groups, including the leadership team, the superintendent's cabinet or advisory group, and other advisory groups of supervisors. Each director spent a great deal of time in these meetings working with principals, educating them, and modeling the skills necessary to enhance the principal's abilities to be the instructional leader in his or her building. These interactions took place in both formal and informal environments.

In each case, the curriculum directors were viewed as an equal by building principals and utilized by these colleagues as the district's technical expert in the area of curriculum and instruction.

Communicates with Teachers: A great deal of time was spent by each curriculum director in interactions with staff. Each director had the responsibility to educate

and work with a plethora of curriculum committees, teacher groups, and individual staff members concerning a multitude of instructional and curricular issues. The curriculum directors viewed themselves as the givers and receivers of vital information for the organization.

Again and again collegiality, respect, and care showed as the curriculum directors interacted with staff members. While they were not above being direct when conferring with staff members, their primary tactics included suggesting, listening, probing with questions, and appealing to individual teacher interests. Data indicated their interventions tended to be well received.

These curriculum directors believed that to enhance and improve student learning, they had to begin with staff. Consequently, much energy was spent explaining and talking to staff in attempts to build a connectiveness between the staff and the new learnings.

Group Facilitation Skills: In this study, each curriculum director modeled strong facilitation skills and used the power of group dynamics superbly. They have each established a repertoire of efficient and effective tactics to deal with people within the change process. In order to maximize their efforts in the process skills, each director had developed excellent communication skills.

When possible, they tended to push others and work with teachers so the staff member would become the leader and the director would fulfill the role of committee participant. However, if the committee was new or was having difficulty, the director could easily help the group progress forward toward its goal.

With time being a consideration, each curriculum director viewed their presence at each meeting purposeful and important. Their role was to be the information source, to pass along information of a curriculum and instructional nature, or to help others develop new skills and find new knowledge.

Curriculum and Instruction

The second overriding theme was curriculum and instruction. The four curriculum directors in the study were found to have the responsibility to direct and lead the curricular and instructional portion of their respective school organizations. As the "defacto" instructional leader, each curriculum director was responsible for planning, presenting, monitoring, and adjusting the district's vision in curriculum and instruction within the organization. Each was obligated to ensure that the goals of curriculum and instruction were accomplished. Two distinct categories of work were found to fit within the curriculum and instruction theme:

Develops Curriculum: These curriculum directors were the district leaders in suggesting, testing, and implementing new teaching strategies and curricular changes. While a superordinate was assigned responsibility for curriculum development, each director in this study was found to be ultimately responsible for the entire curriculum development process.

Each director had many committees, composed of teachers who she guided in the curriculum development process. These committees were found to be in different places in the process: research and development, adoption, or implementation. These curriculum directors were helping the groups move forward.

These curriculum directors actively involved others in the curriculum development process. Each committee was chaired by fellow teacher who is a specialist in that field. The directors took responsibility to initiate the curriculum development processes, facilitate whenever necessary, and guide the groups through the change process.

Whenever possible, the curriculum directors made efforts to keep out of the leadership position to enable staff create a self-ownership in the decisions which were made.

Facilitates Selecting Materials: Without exception, the supervision of the selection of new textbooks and supplementary materials was viewed as each curriculum director's work. As symbolic head of the curriculum area, they were involved in the process as facilitator, guide, and leader. This leadership role included providing information, facilitating the change process, and supporting teachers in the process.

Each director reported she followed-up the adoption process with some extra support to ensure a smooth transition into the new materials and concepts. While each curriculum director indicated she completed this task, data indicates that, with time being a consideration, these directors would rather work in developing new materials and leave the support to the building principal or teacher leaders.

Program Management

The third overriding theme was found to be program management. Data indicated the curriculum directors in this study focused closely on work that was tightly linked to accomplishing designated organizational goals. Only those roles or tasks that enabled the instructional division to move toward the goals were deemed important by the curriculum directors studied. In examining the work done, it was clear that those activities that did not fit organizational goals in curriculum and instruction were ignored, assigned a low status, or delegated to others.

At times, these four curriculum directors chose to focus their efforts on work they viewed as related but viewed by others as somewhat tangential to their primary

work, the improvement of curriculum and instruction. Within this theme, implementing staff development was found to be an important category.

Implements Staff Development: In their activities, the curriculum directors addressed the coordination of staff development, the teaching of inservice classes, and the development of grounded, cutting-edge practices. Each of these tasks were viewed as important supportive work and a necessary extension of the work to accomplish relevant organizational goals.

A variety of staff development offerings were made available to teachers including summer institutes, released-time inservices, evening college classes, and district sponsored workshops. All of these directors were very active in teaching the staff development classes for their district. They taught college-level classes both each academic quarter and in the summer. They presented in a multitude of other formats and were committed to helping staff learn new practices and techniques.

Technical Expertise

The final overriding theme of work is that of technical expertise. Each curriculum director was viewed as the symbolic leader of the instructional part for their district. As such, this leader was expected to model the curricular and instructional goals of the organization. In addition, these curriculum directors, as the person with the most knowledge or the technical expert, had the ability to impart this knowledge to other district leaders and the teaching staff.

Becomes the Technical Expert: These administrators were found to behave as district "experts" in forecasting trends, anticipating problems, and providing accurate information regarding instructional and curricular issues. Discussions with these four curriculum directors indicated that each was charged with

restructuring and transforming the district through the use of new and evolving practices. They were respected by district staff from teachers through superintendents as the person with the most knowledge in the curriculum and instruction area.

(2) How was each curriculum directors' work conducted?

The specific actions, behaviors, and workstyles exhibited by Helen, Annette, Diane, and Kelly were ingrained into their behaviors and were established through a theoretical background and followed by a great deal of experience and practice. These four curriculum directors were successful in causing change to occur by working through the various contextual factors and through the use of varying leadership traits and styles.

Four workstyles were found to be used predominately by these curriculum directors to complete their work. The workstyles are not discrete categories by themselves. Each had a methodology to work with teachers, administrators, other staff, and patrons to accomplish organizational goals. The different workstyles included use of situational leadership, support for change, developmental levels, and planning strategies.

Situational Leadership: While no particular model of situational leadership was discussed by any of the curriculum directors, each clearly displayed the characteristics of a situational leadership style (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) including the ability to use different actions in different situations and they adjusted their style based on their perception of the clientele.

Supporting Change: Data indicated that these four curriculum directors were all masterful in supporting and nurturing change. They understood the change process and they moved both entire school staffs and individual teachers through it repeatedly.

As a group or individual would move from one stage to another (for example, from the awareness of an innovation to gathering information on it) the curriculum director understood what was occurring and was ready to support and help that group or individual through the transition to the next level in the process (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1989).

Developmental Levels: These curriculum directors realized that there are times when people could not change or improve due to their position at a certain developmental level.

These directors were able to recognize which the level each the staff member was at currently and knew what would be necessary to create the desire for the individual to continue to grow, change, and move forward. In addition, they understood that in order for a teacher to move into the next step or level in the change process, these curriculum directors needed to fulfill a set of needs at his or her current level.

Planning Strategies: Taking quality time to plan was found to be a part of each curriculum director's workstyle. Each director took the time to plan out their actions, strategies, and schemes. Through quality planning, these curriculum directors were able to more efficiently do quality work. While efforts were made to find time to plan during the workday, this planning time was often taken from evenings and weekends.

(3) What were the contextual factors that conditioned these curriculum directors' work?

The work of curriculum directors was impacted by various contextual factors that existed within each district, in the surrounding community, and at state and federal levels. The factors within which each curriculum director worked were derived from internal and external sources, past and present realities, and projected future goals and plans. These contextual factors created a tension or stress in the work by posing potential conflicts in making decisions, actions taken, or planning done by the curriculum director.

Each contextual factor was found to either enhance or inhibit efforts to improve the instructional portion of the organization. Each curriculum director endeavored to achieve a state of equilibrium in the work where the organizational goals for the curricular and instructional part of the organization were being addressed.

The contextual factors found in this study were synthesized into four broad areas or categories, including internal factors, external factors, intrinsic factors, and time factors.

Internal Factors: The internal factors were comprised of elements within the district. These elements include the organizational structure, adopted procedures, budget priorities, and organizational goals. As a general rule, these factors were established by the district to facilitate and not to hinder the curriculum director's work.

The organizational structure set the parameters for the position and status of the curriculum director within the organization. In each case, the curriculum

director was found to have the ability to move through the formal bureaucratic structure with in her district with little or no trouble to accomplish her work.

District procedures included the organization's decision-making process and budget priorities. In these districts, funding curriculum and instruction was a priority.

The district goals represented the priorities of the organization. Each district reported improving student achievement and implementing grounded change was as part of the overriding goal or mission. The curriculum directors reported that having these curriculum goals addressed helped them in their work.

External Factors: The external factors included both the governmental and community environments that surrounded and embodied each district. Governmental contextual factors encompassed the rules, regulations, and other mandates issued through state and federal agencies. The rules and regulations that disseminate from these agencies were not found to impede the work in these districts for two reasons. First, these directors were proactive in the curriculum area. Frequently, when a new rule emerged as a legislative mandate, these districts had already adopted it. Second, this state allows districts to apply and receive a waiver for practices that are outside state guidelines. This waiver process was used as necessary. Each curriculum director indicated this process was available to her to use and perceived that in each case any waiver filed would be readily approved by the Office of the State Superintendent.

Contextual factors that evolved from the community were characterized by local expectations and specific local demands placed on the district by patrons and citizen groups. This set of factors was a yearly problem in these districts since the districts relied upon a variety of levies and bonds for some of their funding. However, district leaders reported that even when voters turn down the financial

requests, money was still allotted for curriculum development and improvement of instruction.

Intrinsic Factors: Intrinsic factors were qualities that exist internally within the district's staff. For the most part, these factors were found to hinder the curriculum director's work, and in each case much of the director's energy was spent overcoming these factors.

The readiness for change to occur, the motivation or commitment to change, the past history regarding change, and the competence or the use of specific skills were all contextual factors found in district employees and were found to affect the curriculum director's work.

The leadership ability of the curriculum director, as well as technical knowledge base, reputation, and respect from district staff form a second contextual factor that affected the work. These directors allotted professional time to attend conferences and seminars, as well as time to dialogue with peers and other educators to reduce this factor.

Time Factors: The time factors were the priority given to each employee's workday, including both the curriculum director's workday and the allotment of staff time. How the curriculum director was directed to spend the day affected her work. Any tasks, roles, or work not directly related to curriculum and instruction assigned to the curriculum director had an impact on the work.

In addition, the amount of quality time provided to staff for training, education, inservice, and coaching was also a contextual factor which affected the curriculum director's work.

Summary of the Study

Describing the work of four exemplary curriculum directors was the initial focus of this study. It was completed with the intention of creating a clearer understanding of the role and work of an exemplary curriculum director. The study provides an insight into the work of these four exemplary curriculum directors as each strived to reach the goals of their organization.

This study examined the work of four exemplary curriculum directors who were nominated as exemplary. This research indicates that there may be five reasons that others believed these curriculum directors were exemplary and nominated them to be in this study. First, these directors make many presentations at the local, state, and national levels. They are seen as superb presenters and receive visibility as leaders through these presentations. Second, they have excellent credibility in the curriculum area and are a highly educated group. Each has been accepted as an adjunct professor at a state university. Third, they have published articles and books and are seen as working in cutting-edge curriculum and instructional areas. Next, they are leaders in various state organizations, especially in the state curriculum association. Finally, the researcher found them to be warm, caring, and sincere in their actions and deeds. Data does not indicate that they have a reputation that emulates directly from work done within their district. Rather, the reputation may result from activities outside each director's district.

Findings from this study indicated that the work of these curriculum directors could be synthesized into the following eight categories: (1) Communicates with supervisor, (2) Communicates with other administrators, (3) Communicates with teachers, (4) Group facilitation skills, (5) Develops curriculum, (6) Facilitates selecting materials, (7) Implements staff development, and (8) Becomes the technical expert. Further examination demonstrated these eight categories of work fit within

the following four major themes initially synthesized from the literature: (1) communication, (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) program management, and (4) technical expertise.

To understand the work, a clear understanding of the contextual factors was found to be vital. The factors were found to word either as a sieve, buffer, or contributor though which the work was accomplished. The contextual factors in this study were synthesized into four broad areas or categories, including internal factors, external factors, intrinsic factors, and time factors.

The work must be viewed within the contextual factors and the total environment that surrounds the work. Neither work nor the factors could be viewed in isolation. Each was found to be interdependent upon the other. As the contextual factors influence the work, they either inhibit or benefit the work, and in turn, move the organization either toward or away from attainment of its goals.

These four curriculum directors were found to be successful in creating change. They worked through the various contextual factors to accomplish their work through the use of varying leadership traits and styles. Four separate workstyles were used by these directors to complete their work. The different workstyles included situational leadership, support for change, respect for developmental levels, and effective planning.

Through the study, the uncertainty, vulnerability, and very slow and deliberate progress of each curriculum director was revealed. These directors did not believe in the panacea of "quick fixes" concerning curricular and instructional issues. Rather, efforts were made to create a district-wide culture which could adjust it's structure and resources to meet the specific needs of children through an evolutionary process.

Improvement in student learning within each district due to the work of these curriculum directors was not validated during the study. An enriched curriculum,

improved instruction, and a better educated teaching staff were all found through data analysis. In addition, efforts were being made to embed the better techniques and practices into the culture of the district. An intuitive sense was gained that suggested the learning was improving as a result of these practices.

The data in this study indicated that the vision of these four curriculum directors and the vision of their immediate supervisor were very similar. Further, the district philosophy was also similar to the vision of the director. Clearly all the directors were working hard to implement their visions and to help their districts attain the stated goals. It appeared that either each director was able to manage or maneuver the goals of the organization to closely match their own goal or vision or the chose to work in the district that closely matched their beliefs. It seems that in two of the cases, Helen Shepherd and Annette Morant, the former was true since they had only worked in one district. In the other two districts, it appeared as though the director had moved the district vision toward her own.

The information reported in this study has made a contribution toward explaining the work of exemplary curriculum directors, the contextual factors that affect the work, and how they complete the work. Practicing curriculum directors and aspiring curriculum directors will benefit from these results. Perhaps the results of this study may benefit aspirants by presenting the experiences of those exemplary directors who have successfully preceded them in the curriculum director's position.

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